

Estimate of the Situation

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Managing in the Era of the New Normal: Part III

The traditional management process comprises the following sequential functions:

1. Planning
2. Organizing
3. Directing
4. Controlling

Each function flows logically into the next. The management process is also called the management cycle because each function is repeated in an ordered sequence.

In last week's issue we discussed the organizing function. This week's topic is the directing function.

Directing isn't about "bossing people around" or micro-managing. Directing involves:

- Clearly and precisely communicating performance expectations in all critical result areas (cost, quality, physician and patient satisfaction, and community image). Telling a manager that high productivity is expected sounds good, but announcing that undefined goal does not communicate an expectation clearly and precisely. However, establishing a department productivity goal of 9.50 worked hours per unit of service does.
- Assuring that people doing each department's work are well trained and motivated. Failure to do this will result in unnecessary time demands and a lot of "upward delegation".
- Making certain that the standard processes and methods required to obtain desired results exist and are always used. The Directing Function of management should not be confused with the Controlling function which will be the topic of next week's issue.

In layered organizations, direction is best provided by delegating responsibility for the function to the manager closest to the work. Most of the time, particularly in clinical or specialized technical departments, the staff's professional education and training will minimize the need for hands-on routine direction in the performance of regular tasks. Direction is sometimes required from management when unforeseen or unusual circumstances arise. These can include responding to instances of non-performance, failures to follow established processes, or violations of known professional standards.

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